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SUBJECT: JORDAN: MEDIA REACT TO KING'S U.S. VISIT

¶1. SUMMARY: Wednesday's newspapers in Jordan led with extensive coverage of the President's meeting with King Abdullah at the White House Tuesday. Beneath banner headlines reading "Jordan, U.S. See Eye To Eye On Peace," reports stressed the two leaders' commitment to moving the Middle East peace process forward. Initial op-ed commentaries lauded the President's expression of strong support for the two-state solution. As additional op-ed commentaries appear in coming days, post will transmit further media reaction reports. END SUMMARY.

¶2. All newspapers published Wednesday in Jordan led with extensive front-page coverage of the President's meeting with King Abdullah. Beneath banner headlines and sub-headlines summarizing the major points of the two leaders' discussion, coverage appeared alongside several color photos conveying a tone of friendship and rapport between the two leaders. The headline by the Jordan Times was representative: "Jordan, U.S. See Eye To Eye On Peace." The content of the reports on the White House meeting relied heavily on the official version provided by the Jordan News Agency.

¶3. News reports carried extensive quotes from the two leaders' joint press availability, highlighting their emphasis on "the importance of moving within the framework of effective steps to end the conflict and establish comprehensive and just peace in the region." The King is quoted as stressing the President's "full commitment" to Jordan and the Arab countries to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The President is quoted as praising the King's peace efforts in the region and the world. Reports also highlighted the President's description of the Arab Peace Initiative as "a constructive beginning," as well as his "strong support for the two-state solution."

¶4. (U) Initial editorial commentary:

-- "The Jordanian-American Summit Meeting"

Chief editor Taher Odwan comments in the April 22 edition of the independent, opposition Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm, "Obama's clear reference to the two-state solution at this point in time represents a response to remarks made by Netanyahu and Lieberman who do not conceal their objection to the establishment of a Palestinian state and to the Arab initiative, as well as their rejection of peace process mechanisms, which the former U.S. administration had adopted, such as the Roadmap and the Annapolis meeting. Yet, the pan-Arab mission of the King in Washington is not the end of the road, but rather it opens the doors wide for Arab countries to shoulder their responsibilities towards the Palestinian cause and the restoration of occupied lands. This requires a speedy Arab action to put in place mechanisms for the Arab action and to follow up on the important outcomes of the King-Obama meeting, as well as to follow up on developments in the American stand and the American-Israeli relationship."

-- "The King Is Best to Represent the Nation"

The main editorial in the April 22 edition of the government-aligned Arabic daily Ad-Dustour opines, "President Obama's emphasis on the two-state solution correlates with the Arab stance and the

international decisions, and constitutes a decisive response to Netanyahu's attempts to evade and bypass the international decisions.... The importance of the American position stems from the dangerous nature of the stage through which the region is going after the victory of the Israeli right-wing party and its rejection to acknowledge the Palestinian partner and the Annapolis agreements that call on Israel to stop the settlement activity and for establishing two states. This [position] needs to be translated into action on the ground with effective steps.... By carrying the Arab stand vis-à-vis the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to the American President, the King proved to be the best to represent the nation and the best to adopt its causes, especially the Palestinian cause, which is considered the Arabs' central cause whose fair solution on the basis of the two states and the return of the refugees is the only way out of the dark tunnel."

-- "The King's Meeting with Obama: Dotting Difficult Words"

Senior columnist Sultan Hattab in the April 22 edition of the leading, government-owned Arabic daily Al-Rai observes, "Personal relations and admiration achieved by chemistry or joint convictions may not be enough to overcome the great difficulties when the persons concerned are responsible for countries and peoples and when the pending issues are as major and complex as the Middle East issue. Yet, personal relations do play an important role.... The royal mission is not easy. It helps Obama answer the question of what the Arabs want from the United States in this conflict. The answer that the King is providing might be one of its kind in terms of coherence, specificity and summary. Obama will find help in this, because for a long time the Arab parties would differ.... The Arabs now agree on a solution that is based on the establishment of two states, which they believe is necessary for the security and stability of the region and for U.S. interests.... Obama can also help the King ... by exercising the pressure that is capable of establishing the two-state solution, because this solution does not only ensures the establishment of the Palestinian state, but also supports the Jordanian national security by moving it away from the Zionist schemes and from threats of going back to the 'transfer' policy."

-- "The King in America: the True Face of Challenges":

Columnist Abdullah Abu Rumman in the April 22 edition of Al-Rai asserts, "The King's move towards the United States comes amidst complex situations and contexts. It is a move that did not target the new U.S. administration alone, but also the American society, its organizations, and lobbying and influential centers in order to rally support for the Palestinian cause, to re-establish its maximum priority, and to remind everyone that it is the 'core of the conflict' in the Middle East, and that the absence or procrastination of a just solution is the thing that feeds the challenges and dangers in areas where the new U.S. administration sees the maximum priorities."

-- "A Message of Peace"

The main editorial in the April 22 edition of the elite, small-circulation English daily Jordan Times opined, "Bilateral ties, going from strength to strength after 60 years since first initiated, were part of the discussions between the two heads of state, as were Iran, Afghanistan, terrorism in the region, the impact of the economic crisis on the two countries and international cooperation. But, above all, in the U.S. as a representative of the Arabs, first and foremost, King Abdullah made it clear that "we believe that it is important for all of us to keep our eyes on the prize, and the prize is peace and stability for all the people of our region". The first Arab ruler to meet the new US president at the White House, the King carried with him the offer of the entire Arab world: comprehensive peace with Israel in exchange for the return of lands occupied by force and a just settlement to the Palestinian refugee problem.... It is laudable that Obama considers the Arab initiative a very constructive start. But this peace offer, which was formulated at the Beirut Arab summit of 2002, cannot be expected to be forever valid. Israel will have to respond to it if it is serious about peace. Obama, who remains committed to the two-state solution, is well aware that the parties cannot "talk forever, that at some point steps have to be taken so that people can see progress on the ground. And that will be something that we

will expect to take place in the coming months".... He, however, sees, "not just in Israel, but within the Palestinian territories, among the Arab states, worldwide... a profound cynicism about the possibility of any progress being made whatsoever", a bleak assessment, indeed, of the state of affairs. His determination, then, is not enough to revive the deadlocked peace process, especially now that intransigent right-winger Benjamin Netanyahu is prime minister of Israel. Obama made it clear that neither Jordan nor the United States can do things instead of the Israelis and the Palestinians, but that the two parties involved in the conflict will have to make decisions not to perpetuate the conflict "in which generations of Palestinian and Israeli children are growing up insecure, in an atmosphere of hate".

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